

Inspection of St Stephen's CofE School

South Meadow Lane, Preston, Lancashire PR1 8JN

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 November 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, including children in the early years, are proud to attend this friendly school where everyone is made to feel welcome. Pupils benefit from the kind and caring relationships that they have with staff and each other. This helps them to grow in confidence.

Pupils know that staff will always listen to any worries or concerns that they may have. Pupils said that this helps to make the school a happy, safe and harmonious place.

From the moment that children join the early years they are encouraged to follow the St Stephen's Way. The school has high expectations for pupils' achievement and behaviour. Pupils do their best to live up to these expectations. They are polite, respectful, kind and gentle towards others. This creates a calm and purposeful atmosphere in which all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve well.

Pupils relish the wide range of leadership opportunities available to them. For example, pupils who act as representatives of the school council and those who act as 'values leaders' take their roles seriously. They know that they can make a difference to the lives of others. Pupils understand that it is important to be diligent when they take on these extra responsibilities. They explained that these opportunities help to prepare them for life beyond school.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school has designed a suitably broad and ambitious curriculum which meets the needs of pupils, including those with SEND, well. Across subjects, the school has identified the key knowledge that pupils should learn and the order in which this content should be taught.

The school's unvalidated published data for 2023 shows that the proportion of pupils who met the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6 was below the national average. A high proportion of pupils in this year group joined the school partway through the academic year. As a result, some of these pupils joined the school too late in key stage 2 to benefit fully from the school's well-designed curriculum. In the main, current pupils achieve well across a range of subjects.

The school provides high-quality training so that teachers, for the most part, can deliver the curriculum effectively. Teachers use their strong subject knowledge to explain new learning clearly to pupils. Added to this, teachers typically design activities that enable pupils, including children in the Reception Year, to remember the intended curriculum.

In most subjects, teachers use the school's assessment strategies well to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and check their understanding of subject-specific vocabulary. However, in a small number of subjects, these strategies are not used as effectively as they could be. This hinders some pupils from building their knowledge securely over time.

The school ensures that the additional needs of pupils with SEND are identified swiftly and accurately by well-trained staff. Staff receive appropriate training to enable them to adapt their delivery of the curriculum to meet these pupils' needs well. This allows pupils with SEND to learn successfully alongside their classmates and achieve well.

Reading is a whole-school priority. Staff read to children in the Nursery classes often and check that children understand the words in the stories that they hear. Reading areas in all classrooms are warm and inviting spaces. Pupils benefit from access to a wide range of high-quality books. They said that they enjoy reading and they know that it is important to read widely and regularly. For example, class librarians encourage pupils to read more often by setting weekly challenges to inspire their peers to take part in a range of reading tasks.

Phonics begins as soon as children join the Reception classes. Well-trained staff deliver the phonics programme consistently well. Pupils practise their reading with books that are suitably matched to the sounds that they know. Most pupils quickly become confident and fluent readers. Those pupils who struggle to keep up with the phonics programme are given appropriate help by staff.

The school has established clear routines for pupils' behaviour. Pupils behave well in lessons and around school. They are polite and welcoming. For example, pupils were keen to talk to inspectors about their learning. They understand the importance of respect and acceptance of those different to themselves.

Attendance remains a high priority for the school. Staff have taken effective action to reduce the number of pupils who are absent from school too often. The school ensures that, when necessary, pupils and their families receive carefully tailored support to improve their rates of attendance.

The school has an extremely well-thought-through programme of personal, social and health education that meets the diverse needs of pupils well. Pupils have a deep understanding of how to keep themselves healthy and safe, both physically and mentally. The school's values programme provides pupils with regular opportunities to celebrate diversity, both within and beyond its locality. For example, older pupils spoke sincerely about how important it is to understand other cultures and faiths within school.

Governors know the school and its community well. They provide an appropriate balance of challenge and support to school. The school has taken positive action to reduce staff's workload, for example by revising its assessment policy. The school

also ensures that staff are provided with the resources that they require to fulfil their roles effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, the school has not ensured that some teachers use assessment strategies to identify the gaps in pupils' knowledge, including their understanding of some subject-specific vocabulary. This hinders some pupils when they come to apply this knowledge to more complex tasks. The school should ensure that, in these subjects, learning is designed so that pupils can revisit the knowledge that will be most useful for future learning.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	119358
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10294317
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	341
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Jason Ward
Headteacher	Helen Wright
Website	www.st-stephens.lancs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	31 October 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new deputy headteacher and seconded assistant headteacher have been appointed since the last inspection.
- The most recent section 48 inspection took place in March 2020. The school is awaiting confirmation from the diocese about its next section 48 inspection.
- The school makes use of one alternative provider for a small number of pupils.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken this into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and other members of staff. The lead inspector spoke with representatives of the governing body, including the chair of governors. The lead inspector also spoke with representatives of the local authority and of the diocese.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science, computing, and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and to some pupils about their learning. Inspectors also looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector listened to pupils read with a familiar adult. Inspectors also looked at a range of books in other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at various times in the school day. This included during lessons as well as at lunchtime.
- Inspectors considered the views expressed by parents and carers in their responses to Ofsted Parent View. This included the free-text comments. Inspectors spoke with parents as they brought their children to school at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors also took account of the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaires for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Pat Speed, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Gareth Counce	Ofsted Inspector
Ian Shackleton	Ofsted Inspector

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